



TOPIC: PARENTING

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

How can we leverage technology to resolve issues that manifest between parents living in different households but raising the same child(ren) and prevent disputes between all involved, provide support to the parents and the children, create trust between the parties, and foster a nurturing atmosphere for child development?

The most common disputes that require court intervention include:

- Custodial Parent refuses to allow the Non-Custodial Parent to see the child (one of most frustrating cases that almost always requires going to court)
- Parents not comprehending court ordered schedules
- Visitation has been progressing well, and then suddenly they stop b/c of an underlying conflict that a party is uncomfortable discussing (new girlfriend or boyfriend, different house rules, child's feelings hurt over something, etc.)
- New court orders; most often a situation where before the orders, the Custodial Parent had been calling all of the shots; after the orders, (s)he's still not ready to share; parents need assistance in understanding the legal consequences regarding violations, as well as the value of the other parent engaging with child
- Developing a Parenting Plan that works for both parents

Introduction

Many children live in more than one home. Census data shows that, just in Texas, 38% of all children live primarily in a single parent home. Some of these children have parents who were married, but divorced. Some have parents who dated, but never married. And some have parents who don't really know each other at all. They met briefly, made a beautiful baby together, but never actually dated.

Research from the Child and Family Research Partnership of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas shows that children who grow up with involved fathers do better in school and in life. They are:

- 39% more likely to earn A's in school
- 45% less likely to be retained
- 60% less likely to be suspended or expelled
- score higher on math, reading and IQ tests
- twice as likely to go to college and find stable employment after high school
- 75% less likely to have a teen birth
- 80% less likely to spend time in jail

Establishing Trust with other Parent

Shared parenting is difficult under the very best of circumstances, but imagine trying to do it with a stranger. Try imagining handing off your most precious treasure to someone



you barely know – your vulnerable infant, tiny toddler, little boy or little girl. Try putting them in the car with this stranger – it would be next to impossible. If you don't have kids, just think about leaving something as relatively unimportant as your cell phone with this stranger – even that is hard to do! Someone else gets to enjoy it's company, feed it new information, take it places you might never go, expose it to people you might never choose to be around. What if they never come back? And you lose your child (or your cell phone) forever?

You can see how fear of the unknown would make sharing children very difficult. *Good communication* would be key to getting past the fear—making the unknown familiar—and really giving a child the opportunities that naturally develop for children who have frequent and positive parenting from both parents.

Thoughts on Solutions-

Create a mechanism that allows parents to:

- see their customized parenting time calendar (based on their court order)
- share information with each other about the child's
 - health (doctor's number, insurance, medicine, etc.)
 - education (school, teacher's name, schedule, projects/assignments)
 - social welfare (names of friends with contact info for their parents, play dates, practice and game/ recital schedules, etc.)
- share contact information about the parents, and other related parties, e.g. grandparents (address, cell and work phones, etc)
- scrapbook feature (securely share photos of the child between the two parents)

Preventing a Parent From Seeing Child

Court hearings often result from when the Custodial Parent refuses to allow the Non-Custodial Parent to see the child. This is literally when Dad knocks on the door at the appointed time, and Mom tells him she won't let him take the child for his weekend. After several of these attempts, Dad may call the police to ask to help him get his children, and the police tell him that it is a civil matter, and he will have to get a lawyer to go to court. The problem is exacerbated when Mom realizes she can move away, and not tell Dad the new address. (She is still able to get her child support payment because it is direct deposited into her bank account or onto a debit card- so she doesn't even have to update her address with the child support office or the court, even though her order requires to share her contact information with Dad, the child support office and the court). If Dad is unable to find his children, he cannot attempt his visitation at all- but if he cannot find the *mom*, she can't be served with papers to even get into court- and the courts can't help him either. So, in this situation, as soon as he gets an address for mom, he almost has to try to get her served and get into court before she moves away again. (Note, law enforcement still considers it a civil matter when the custodial parent disappears with the child, unless the child is taken out of the country).